Council Highlights: June 2001

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year.

This issue covers the months of May and June 2001.

Government commits to multi-year, full funding for increased enrolment

On May 9, 2001, the government, in the Ontario Budget, announced that it will "increase operating grants to colleges and universities by an estimated $293 million by 2003-2004, directly proportional to the projected enrolment growth."

The Government of Ontario's multi-year commitment to full funding for increased enrolment will enable universities to plan for the longer term, hire faculty, and develop strategic plans that would otherwise be beyond the scope of a single-year budget.

In addition to the operating funds announcement, the provincial government provided $100 million to address maintenance costs for physical facilities. "The investment in maintenance will allow us to improve the physical environment for our students and researchers. This is a wise investment of public funds, which is greatly appreciated by the universities," said Dr. Paul Davenport, Chair of the Council of Ontario Universities and President of the University of Western Ontario.

Ontario universities and the government have been working together for over two years to plan for enrolment increases. "We look forward to a continuation of this productive working relationship as we move forward on our multi-year agenda to ensure that Ontario students at all of our universities have access to excellence," said Dr. Mordechai Rozanski, Vice-Chair of Council (and incoming Chair) and President of the University of Guelph.

A key priority will be to seek further funding for students who are currently in the system but are not funded. Unavoidable cost increases should not erode funding that has been provided for enrolment growth. Council will, therefore, also be seeking funds to cover normal operating increases.

When looking ahead to the challenges of ensuring that growing numbers of students have access to excellence, it is clear that there is still a great deal to be accomplished on a number of fronts. These challenges and key next steps will be the focus of a day-long, Executive Heads' retreat to be held in late June.

Award honouring memory of David Smith presented to Dalhousie professor

At a dinner held in Toronto on May 31, 2001, the first David C. Smith Award for Significant Contribution to Scholarship and Policy on Higher Education in Canada was presented to Dr. David Cameron, Chair of the Department of Political Science at Dalhousie University. Dr. Cameron has published and lectured extensively in the field of higher education and related issues and, of special note, was a member of the government-appointed Advisory Panel on Future Directions in Postsecondary Education in Ontario, which David Smith chaired.

This award, to be presented annually, was established to celebrate the distinguished contributions that the late David Smith made to scholarship and policy in higher education. To further broaden awareness of issues in higher education and of the relationships between public policy and higher education, each year's recipient will be invited to deliver a lecture on a subject

related to the theme of the award. At this year's dinner, following the inaugural presentation of the award, Dr. Cameron delivered a lecture on Postsecondary Education and Canadian Federalism, which will be published as a Council of Ontario Universities paper.

The dinner was attended by Rev. Mary Smith, the late Dr. Smith's wife (who presented the award to Dr. Cameron) and family; Dr. Cameron's wife, Margaret, and family; and government representatives, special guests and members of Council.

Work of COU Task Force on Student Assistance near completion

The COU Task Force on Student Assistance is finalizing a report that details the findings of a comprehensive review of the existing student financial assistance system and its effects on students and institutions. The Task Force, chaired by Dr. Richard Van Loon, President of Carleton University, has worked on the assumption that the goal of any student financial assistance program should be to ensure that all qualified and motivated students have access to postsecondary education regardless of their socio-economic background or special needs.

Over the past decade, there have been considerable changes to Ontario's student financial assistance programs. In general, there has been greater emphasis on the use of loans over grants, more stringent eligibility requirements, and greater pressure on the universities to provide OSAP services that were previously the responsibility of the provincial government. While many of these changes have resulted in improved services to students (for example, shorter delivery time), they have also added to the complexity of an already elaborate confusing system.

The Task Force is expected to submit its final report in June 2001.

Undergraduate medical school enrolment expanded

On May 17, 2001, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care announced that undergraduate medical school enrolment would be expanded by 120 positions over the next two years. These positions are in addition to 40 positions added in September 2000. In total, the 160 new positions represent a 30% expansion in undergraduate class size. The government's announcement was the result of a recommendation made by the Expert Panel on Health Professional Human Resources in its report, Shaping Ontario's Physician Workforce.

The Expert Panel also recommended expanding the postgraduate residency positions by 160 (to complement the undergraduate expansion), adding more residency positions to provide advanced skills in family medicine, ensuring up to two years of residency for fully certified foreign trained physicians, and providing flexibility for current residents who want to transfer between specialities.

The government is expected to make a series of announcements in the coming weeks that respond to the Expert Panel's recommendations and has begun discussions with the Faculties of Medicine on position allocation and resource requirements.

New medical school established in Northern Ontario

On May 17, 2001, the government announced that it would create a new medical school in Northern Ontario with a main site at Laurentian University and a clinical education campus at Lakehead University. The plan is to begin admitting students in 2004 with an undergraduate class size of 55 and to use the latest e-learning technologies in the delivery of the new medical program.

OUAC's new headquarters ready on time and on budget

More than 250 guests attended the official opening of Ontario Universities' Application Centre's new building at 170 Research Lane in Guelph on May 25, 2001. Dr. David Marshall, Chair of the OUAC Advisory Board and President of Nipissing University, welcomed university presidents,

government representatives, OUAC staff and families, construction trades people and many other friends of OUAC to the ceremony.

Dr. Mordechai Rozanski, incoming Chair of COU and President of the University of Guelph, shared good wishes from the Council. Jamie Mackay, Director of the Universities Branch, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Brenda Elliott, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and MPP for Guelph-Wellington, brought greetings from the government. Following the ribbon cutting, COU President Ian Clark unveiled the commemorative plaque and congratulated the OUAC staff on behalf of the COU Secretariat. Plaques were also presented to key contracting companies and individuals as acknowledgment of their contributions. A reception and tour, which included demonstrations and explanations of the Centre's various automated processes, followed.

Construction of the new building, which began last fall, was completed in mid-April – one month ahead of schedule – and total costs were within the OUAC budget. The new premises are 50% larger than OUAC's previous offices and will permit the Centre to conduct more efficiently its ever-expanding activities, which include the processing of applications during the double cohort years and beyond. Located in the south-central part of Guelph, the building is closer to main access routes, and staff at the new centre have already noticed a significant increase in drop-in applicants seeking information on Ontario's universities.

CCOU Chair and Vice-Chair re-elected at May meeting

Wendy Cecil-Cockwell, Chair of the Council of Chairs of Ontario Universities (CCOU), and Carol McAulay-Weldon, Vice-Chair of CCOU, were re-elected for another term at the CCOU meeting held on May 31, 2001. According to the constitution of CCOU, a chair and a vice-chair are to be elected annually, the term to begin on July 1. Ms. Cecil-Cockwell, who is Chair of the Governing Council of the University of Toronto, and Ms. McAulay-Weldon, who is Chair of the Board of Governors of the University of Western Ontario, will continue in their respective CCOU roles until June 30, 2002.

University applications continue to increase in volume

Application statistics released by the Ontario Universities' Application Centre in mid-May continue to show an increase in the number of applicants seeking admission to full-time undergraduate studies at Ontario universities beginning September 2001. A total of 60,539 applicants from Ontario secondary schools submitted 240,814 applications (university program selections). This represents an increase of 2.3% in the number of individuals applying when compared to the same date last year. University choices were up 6.7% indicating that more applicants are applying to a greater number of individual institutions.

Application volume from applicants not currently registered in an Ontario secondary school increased by 5.7% this year. This category of applicants includes college and university transfers, applicants from other provinces and "stop-outs" who completed secondary school in past years. Part of the increased volume is attributed to the Centre's user-friendly on-line web application, which has attracted over 17,700 undergraduate applicants from across Canada and almost 5,000 from over 130 countries around the world.

Minister attends OPAS Board meeting

On April 30, 2001, Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), attended the meeting of the OPAS Board of Directors, at which time ideas related to advanced skills and e-learning were exchanged. The discussion followed an earlier meeting between the Minister; Michael Roach, Chair of the OPAS Board of Directors; and Dr. Bob Rosehart, President of Wilfrid Laurier University.

The distinctive university-industry partnership, which OPAS represents, adheres to objectives that are similar to components of the HRDC mandate. The main focus of the discussions was

determining more effective ways of working together. HRDC is a continuing supporter of OPAS and an important member of the partnership.

Update on secondary school issues

Three main subjects continue to dominate COU's concerns regarding secondary school issues: the double cohort phenomenon, the stability and reliability of grades during the transition period to the new secondary school program of studies, and the implementation of the new Grade 11 and Grade 12 U and U/C courses.

Projections of the increase in student demand are based on assumptions about the actual percentage of secondary school students who will complete the program in four years. A major study of the academic intentions of students currently in grades 9 and 10 (which Prof. Alan King of Queen's University is directing) has not yet been completed. According to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), which is sponsoring the project, preliminary results suggest that students are accepting the new four-year model, even though there are no academic sanctions to discourage them from taking more than four years to complete their studies.

If the Grade 9 and 10 students adhere to their intentions and conform to the four-year model, the combination of graduates from both the old and the new programs in 2003 may be *somewhat larger* than predicted. However, it would be premature to draw conclusions until the study is completed. MTCU and the universities will continue to monitor the pattern of course selection and the academic progress of high school students.

COU is working with representatives of the Ministry of Education to ensure the consistency and reliability of grading practices and standards as the new Grade 11 and Grade 12 courses are introduced. The factors involved are complex and uncertain. COU has asked that the subject of the correlation between Grade 12 U and U/C grades and those from OACs be considered at the next meeting of the Curriculum Implementation Partnership. The Ministry of Education made the commitment that, during the course of secondary school reform, grades from the new and the old programs would be comparable. The Ontario University Council on Admissions (OUCA) has discussed the situation extensively and continues to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Education to consider means of ensuring that all students are treated equitably, recognizing that the Ministry and boards of education must ensure that the evaluation of these students during the transition period from the old curriculum to the new curriculum is done in a consistent, comparable manner.

COU, at its last meeting, adopted a resolution on a motion forwarded by the COU Task Force on Secondary School Affairs. The resolution asks that the Ministry of Education implement a scheme for monitoring teachers' compliance with the new curriculum and with ministerial standards of evaluation at the Grade 11 and Grade 12 levels. The review panels proposed by COU would include university subject specialists, whose participation would be extended during the development phase of the new program.

Enrolment review completed, report underway

The Committee on Enrolment Statistics, Projections and Analysis (CESPA), under the umbrella of the Council on University Planning and Analysis (CUPA), met twice this spring to discuss its enrolment review project. The committee's final report, which focuses on historical, current and projected university enrolment patterns, will be completed and distributed in June 2001.

U of T President speaks at breakfast seminar

On May 8, 2001, the Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) and ITAC Ontario hosted a breakfast seminar featuring Dr. Robert Birgeneau, President of the University of Toronto. Dr. Birgeneau spoke about the importance of basic research, its impact on the economy, and the key role that universities play. (Visit COU's web site for a copy of the presentation.) Ninety members

of ITAC and OPAS-invited partners and guests attended the seminar, which was held at the National Club in Toronto.

This is the third in a series of business forums co-ordinated by OPAS to make business better aware of the important contributions of universities.

New feature added to COU's web site

COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca) has added a new feature called "Notable Speeches and Articles" under "Publications." Check out *The Waterloo Way: From Knowledge to Innovation*, an address given by David Johnston, President of the University of Waterloo; and *Basic Research and the Economy*, presented by Dr. Robert Birgeneau, President of the University of Toronto. Look for more speeches and articles in the coming months.

Conference on intellectual property and copyright held in May

OPAS and the Cultural Careers Council of Ontario hosted a conference on Intellectual Property/Copyright: The Next Decade on May 4, 2001. Dr. Lorna Marsden, President of York University, chaired the conference, held at Glendon Campus. Representatives from the cultural sector, the university community and both levels of government attended the conference, which was a follow up to the Culture Sector Symposium held last year.

Resource Document 2001 available in June

COU's Resource Document 2001, recently updated, will be published and posted on the COU web site in June 2001. The report provides a comprehensive review of trends relevant to Ontario universities across a range of policy areas including grants and revenue, jurisdictional comparisons, comparisons with other sectors, research, tuition fees, student financial assistance, university infrastructure, faculty and staff, and educational attainment and employment.

New *Highlights* brochure on economic impact study now available

A few years ago, COU introduced a printed series of brochures, called *Highlights*, which are quick, easy-to-read summaries of major reports. *Highlights* for the report, *The Economic Impact Study: The Economic Impact of Ontario's Universities*, has recently been published and will be distributed and posted on the COU web site in June 2001. Enterprise Canada Research undertook the COU-commissioned study.